

JUL - 2 1981

IOWA SITE INVENTORY

Division of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
26 E. Market St., Iowa City, Iowa 52240

MAY 29 1981

Site Number 72-016-001
District Name _____
Map Reference # 72-016-001
Topo Map Sibley 1:24,000

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Osceola County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Sibley Township _____ County Osceola
3. Street Address SE corner 3rd Avenue and 8th Street
4. Legal Location OT 28
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 277500 northing _____; Acreage less than 1 ac
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel
Rural: township range section 1/4 section-1/4 section
6. Owner(s) Name Osceola County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address Courthouse Sibley Iowa 51249
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1902-03 Architect/Builder E.N. Kinney, Architect
C.E. Atkinson, Builder
10. Building Type: single family dwelling multiple family dwelling commercial
 industrial educational other institutional public religious agricultural
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board & batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints
 wood frame with light members (balloon frame) masonry load-bearing walls
 iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved-if so, when? _____
Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
Aluminum sash and doors, windows partially filled in - tower and original parapets removed 1961, parapets replaced.
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures
 carriage house garage privy other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes-if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings
 densely built-up commercial industrial residential other _____
18. Map _____
19. Photo
Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

SIGNIFICANCE (Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural Significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure c. Not eligible/intrusion

This courthouse admits no readily-definable style. Significant features include the entrance porch, with Roman Doric columns in acutis, and the oculi surmounting the windows above the porch. The interior is very well appointed (perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the building), with rotunda area set off from hallways by column screens. Note wide friezes encrusted with medallions, oval opening in rotunda floor, wooden balusters and brass railings, tile flooring on first floor. Courtroom intact, including light fixtures.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Politics/Government

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure c. Not eligible/intrusion

This courthouse is locally significant as the historical focus of county government, and of the political power and prestige derived from the community's status as the county seat. As center of county government, an Iowa town was reasonably assured of economic and population growth, and a prominent role in local social and political life. The county courthouse represents a significant public investment in a structure built not simply for utilitarian purposes, but also as a monument associated with the historical importance of county organization and development.

See Continuation Sheet

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

- Andreas, A.T. Illustrated Historical Atlas of Iowa. Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875.
- Pratt, LeRoy G. The Counties and Courthouses of Iowa. Mason City, Iowa: Klipto Printing and Office Supply Co., 1977.
- Stanek, Edward and Jacqueline. Iowa's Magnificent County Courthouses. Des Moines: Wallace-Homestead Book Co., 1976.

Prepared by _____ Date January, 1980
 Address _____ Telephone _____
 Organization DHP

FOR DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION USE ONLY	
1. OFFICE INFORMATION SOURCES ON THIS PROPERTY	
<input type="checkbox"/> COUNTY RESOURCE FILE	<input type="checkbox"/> REVIEW AND COMPLIANCE PROJECT:
<input type="checkbox"/> WINDSHIELD SURVEY	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> NATIONAL REGISTER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____
<input type="checkbox"/> GRANTS-IN-AID: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____
<input type="checkbox"/> DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____
2. SUBJECT TRACES	3. PHOTO IMAGES _____
a. _____	_____
b. _____	_____
c. _____	_____
d. _____	_____
e. _____	_____

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s) _____

OSCEOLA COUNTY

Jefferson Davis, destined to be the President of the Confederacy, for a time had a career as a surveyor for the U. S. Government. In 1859, he surveyed the boundaries of the northwestern corner of Iowa and the southwestern corner of Minnesota. It is rumored that upon driving his steel stake, he expressed the opinion that within one hundred miles is the richest soil in the world. Osceola County lies within this radius, and the fertile land within its borders carries a monetary value considerably higher than was ever recognized during the time of Jefferson Davis. Immediately after the organization of Osceola County in 1871, the county assessor placed a value of \$2 per acre on all land for the purpose of establishing a tax base.

Although Iowa was never visited by the famous Seminole Indian Chief of the Everglades, the name Osceola became a common word in the northwestern part of the state after the first convention and nomination of Osceola County officers on July 4, 1872. The first courthouse was built the same year. It was a two-story frame building, built for \$5,000, with shutters dressing all the windows.

During the early days after county organization, groups of professional "boodlers" occasionally became involved in county governments for the purpose of personal gain. Several of these men came into power in the first months after Osceola County organized. They were able to convince the honest county officers that their motives were purely to benefit the county. Before their motives were recognized for what they were, the "gang" managed to spend \$22,000 of county money. They were taken to court and put under a bond which would be forfeited if their future performance was less than noble; whereupon they all left the county.

The first town site was Sibley, where all wagon trails pointed after the completion of the railroad there in 1872. Sibley was also named as the county seat. The second courthouse was built in 1902. It had a clock in a cupola surmounted by a statue of Justice. The brick building was remodeled in the 1920s and again in 1961. Over the years, the courthouse lost first its statue and clock, and finally its entire cupola. This solid brick and stone structure still serves the public.

--from Stanek, Edward, and Jacqueline Stanek,
Iowa's Magnificent County Courthouses. Des
Moines: Wallace-Homestead Book Co., 1976.